

The Mass Art Paper

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"IF WE COULD FIRST KNOW WHERE WE ARE, AND WHITHER WE ARE
TENDING, WE COULD BETTER JUDGE WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT."
-Abraham Lincoln

This issue of the Paper is concerned with the questions of Change in Art Today. The staff of the Paper would like to thank the Creative Writing class for their contributions to the issue. Thanks also to Mrs. Hellerstein.

ART AS LIFE-OR WHAT THE HELL IS THIS JERK DOING?

STOP...STOP. Yes stop reading this paper for about a half minute. Well, why are you still reading it? Is half a minute up or did you even do it at all? Come on and try it...a sort of creative reading participation. This is all I want you to do: For 30 seconds look around, wherever you are at this moment...bus stop, subway, cafeteria (how's your food?), dentist's office (don't worry, you won't feel a thing), in class (fine way to start a new semester; why aren't you paying attention?), playground library, men's or girl's room (don't forget to wash your hands), or wherever you are.

While you're looking around, I want you to count to thirty, about one number for each second (count to yourself or out loud ...but people might look at you...well, whatever's easiest.) Now when I give the signal (you'll know when this time) I want you to start counting and while you do, look about you. This experiment requires your fullest cooperation. Even if you are at a place you (think you) know, I'd like you to do this, even if it's your own cosy room you know and love so well.

OK, now I want you (when I say so in capital letters) to take a deep breath (don't hold it, just get some new air in your lungs to begin your counting) then, starting with "one" begin. Get ready, on your mark (that's where you are), Get set (don't forget to look around).....GO

Surprised??? Didn't think half a minute could be so long did you? Did you notice anything new, or was it the same old place? (now we know that's impossible, for how could you be in the exact same place without stopping time). And you people in the bathroom...you know it's not the same way it was when you entered it. But seriously now, what did you notice? Since I'm taking it for granted that all reading this are artists or are concerned with art (I wonder...maybe I'm underestimating the power our paper has played as a potential parchment for progress) it seems to me of all people YOU would notice more. Movement, expressions, light changes, weather changes, anything at all, the more you notice the higher mark you get.

All right, how does this relate to anything? And that, my friend, is a valid question, (What is Art, and all that). It seems to me we can start with the truth that the concern of the artist hasn't changed at all since man first began painting on that cave (and we've gone through a lot of themes since then). And that very concern is LIFE, yes life, that "thing" I asked you to get a short glimpse of, thirty seconds worth. It is all around us, everywhere we turn, look, hear, smell, taste, touch, and feel. It's not in one book, or in seventy books, but in all. It's not just in one instructor or two, it's in all

instructors. It's not in New York or Chicago or Berkeley but in all the universe. It's not in just one or two students but it's in us all.

Art is in that rock you just kicked a while ago. Art is in that "every part" which is that very part of the whole. We can never really know that whole; only through the parts can we "sense" that whole. It seems to me that reality and fantasy can be fused to form the life force which is man uniting with nature. Art is an Idea united with action. And to have ideas and live them out, knowing them as part of the whole (part of nature) then one can create not only art but a true sense of living, which in the whole scheme of things is much more important.

The reason I asked you, at the beginning of this paper, to look around was for you yourself to realize who is living your life. Who sees nature but you? Who feels life but you? Who is dying but you? And "you are just part of the whole,

It all has to do with the way we perceive that "truth" that is going on around us right now. When I say that art is life I really mean it can be and vice versa. It is only the one who realizes that he is part of the whole who can create. One should become one with life, and then in creating, he should become one with himself aside from nature, for only in that can he communicate.

This clearly relates to one of my latest "works of art" which I did in Kenmore Square. I called it PLACE, CIRCUMSTANCE AND PROCESS - and basically it in-

involved going to the square "armed" with a movie camera, and filming unsuspecting people as they came walking by me. The idea was to illustrate the effect one person can have on other people by just becoming part of the environment.

What I noticed was the alarming number of people who were completely indifferent to me and to each other ...not one seemed to realize themselves as part of the whole; all seemed caught up in their own little worlds, yet there I had it on film how each of those people was having some effect of the other, whether it was to go around another, or just to wait for someone to go by. But the real tragedy was that no one was able to perceive this...they all existed, and are right now existing on this one little planet as parts of a whole which in turn is part of the whole of the universe (we are just beginning to perceive that). We all just have to come to grips with the way we all affect each other, for in the very near future if not now, our survival depends on our being able to get along with each other...peacefully.

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EDITORIAL

As editor, I am supposed to filter subjects to their essences and then opinionize about them. I don't know what to say about Changes in Art Today.

Forms, means, may be changing, but substances, goals, seem to be constant. Luciano Fabro, considered a thoroughly modern "artist povera", borrowed from Francis Bacon when he stated his objectives this way: "My certainty: my sense for my action. A new logic that should be particular and supply the means for the development of the human spirit in the world. To discover the order of things, to determine, instead of the essences, the useful secondary properties, the modes of action, with the aim of an inert contemplation, to induce the cause from the effects that make themselves felt to sharpen and systemize with this aim the observation and reflexion. To acquire the instruments of the spirit and to extend by their means the power of the hand into new instruments, to extend one's own body into all things of the world; the things as obedient numbers; imitating nature but deeming to transform her according to human ideas. To analyze her instead of abstracting. To substitute the inventory of chance by the adequate method of profitable reformative invention. To assume this infinite undertaking. To "make" this infinity, in which man will neither lose himself nor vainly agitate. To choose this herculean path of virtuous weariness, to let go the easy, seducing flowery path without the fruits of work, of edifying contemplation, of the outlets that at their most are just good enough for those that love to hurl themselves into nothing." Germano Celant, in an essay on conceptual art, says that today's artist "abolishes his role of being an artist, intellectual, painter, or writer and learns again to perceive, to feel, to breathe, to walk, to understand, to make himself a man." He goes on to say that "the first discoveries of this dispossession are the finite and infinite moments of life, the work of art and work that identifies itself with life, ... the explosion of the individual dimension as an aesthetic and feeling communion with nature, the object-subject as physical presence continuously changing, as a trial of existence that becomes continuous, chaotic, spatial, and differs temporally. ... To create art, then, one identifies with life and to exist takes on the meaning of

re-inventing at every moment a new fantasy, pattern of behavior, aestheticism, etc. of one's own Life. What is important is... to live it as work, to be surprised on knowing the world, to be available to all the facts of life (death, illogic, madness, casualness, nature, real, unreal, symbiosis). Conceptual art's means may be totally different from those of the past, and the men using them may choose not to name themselves "artists". Still, the present's impetus is no different than it has ever been. And the end goal, "to feel, to breathe, to understand... to identify with life" is constant. Forms, means, in art evolve just as the human body adapts itself to new demands by shedding obsolete parts and taking on new parts as it needs them for survival. The life substance of the body, like the life substance of art (whether it is named "art" or not) hasn't changed and will not die until the homo sapien is extinct.

It seems that we are a self-conscious age; we worry ourselves more than men used to. Technology makes us believe that we're more volatile than we used to be, that our natures have grown more destructive since the advent of a crop of Ultimate Weapons. (Renata Adler frets about our tendency "to use the vocabulary of total violence, with less and less consciousness of its ingredient of metaphor, to cultivate scorched-earth madness as a form of consciousness (of courage, even), to call history mad, to dismiss every growing, improving human enterprise as a form of tokenism, an irrelevance in which one has no obligation to take part.") The consequences of unleashed violence are wider and more total than they were in the past, but the important unhealthy condition—which could inadvertently set off wide and total violence—occurs when we chase our own tails, when we try to rout out the human animal's natural, even potentially constructive, "enemy", aggression (See Konrad Lorenz's book "On Aggression", a bible) by moving in circles faster and faster and becoming thoroughly dizzy and frantic (a vicious circle). Art, named "art" or not, is a necessary constructive outlet for aggression, and has been since Man the species, Man the aggressor, was born.

I don't know. I'm constantly flinching in the face of my "power" as editor, and this present topic, if I really believed an absolute answer existed, could be the source of a kind of mental heartbreak. I don't think I'll ever attain the pedagogical omniscience necessary to outguess society. My real faith is in the durability of the individual.

Barbara Du Val

Pity the poor freshman herded from the securely regimented world of high school into the semi-progressive, semi-liberated universe of Mass. Art. Consider leaving a community where Abstract Expressionism is avant-garde and Andrew Wyeth is king, to a strange land where a letter from Tom Dempsey is Art and a show in the main gallery contains no objects, only conceptual presentations. I said semi-progressive because this fantastic new administration that inaugurates such exciting shows exists alongside of cultural lags, such as the inadequate Saturday class show. The poor quality of this exhibition I attribute not to the naivete of the high school students but to the T.E. department formula for teaching high school students. Freshmen are confronted, perhaps for the first time, by some very good instructors who make them think and treat them like creative people, and other original first century teachers talk at them and smother any creativity. I sat on a Freshmen Review Board and saw the consternation that results from these inconsistencies. Unfortunately some instructors feel that more structure is needed to solve all the freshmen's problems. Luckily the administration is involved in liberalization and meaningful change. I'm sure fresh curriculum, new avenues, and good instructors in the school will make it very soon an extremely worthwhile place for artists. I only hope the good Freshmen have foresight to hold on and take advantage of these changes. Please remember that these views are those of a bitter departing Senior.

Leo Abbett

"Orange, when on top of violet, sings." (Lawrence Kupferman, quoted from a Pictorial Dynamics lecture, spring, 1969)

AHH!
(-who's Violet?
-she must be good.)

Sam Orange is a travelling salesman working for the United Fruit Company. at present, he is at the Shadyrest Motel in Anytown USA, getting it from a local girl,

Penelope Violet.

Well now, Sam and Penelope were havin' a real good time when all of a sudden Sam starts to sing.

Hey now, sam honey, what y'all singin' about now anyhow
Why penelope i don't rightly know
what i'se is singin' about
but

I'se is SINGIN'!

you sho' is.....

AHH!

Orange, when on top of Violet, sings...
.ah!

R. Bertelotti

Garbed in the holy vestments of creativity, you must all be walking about haloed with golden maturity, suffused with the blue-white light of consuming artistic desire, leaving fluorescent footprints of expanded vision, heated with the consuming fire of dedication.

For myself, if the truth be told, I've been wearing the same clothes for the past three days - my fingernails are dirty, I'm overtired, bitchy and can hardly wait for semester break so I can do nothing. Not pick up a pencil or think an intelligent thought. I need a bath, I've been known to worry about things like bills, getting pregnant, gaining weight, and working after graduation. I live in a moderately priced, steam heated apartment, I go to Mass Art too, along with you other golden creatures. I guess I'm just different. So could you cut down on the noise-you're lousy neighbors-all you ever seem to do is talk-and I've got work to do...

I.

somethings going to melt soon but before it does, you will.
You are melting, stirring and feeling sun and the yellow heat explosion that should only come at the witching hour of two o'clock sharp.
when we are greenly spindling and stretching our skinny hairs,
you have already reached some sprouting hill and cawlec the frozen stairs.

Phyllis Bellevance

II.

if you will steal a page, I will hand over to you, your pick of the windpipes and flutes and green-speckled fruits and anything else that will keep this pinkish horney toad from licking my ears when I try to sleep. Those things in his warts are clearly the roots.

upon approaching a goodly sized one, I noticed it was tearing out pages and licking each leaf as though it had never tasted such words - good.

closer it came to the end of the lines and I rescued the hardback cover seeing it now, as pickles and brines I gobble it down like the other, who gobbles the rest and looks for another

Phyllis Bellevance

III.

when Baj climbed the orange tree he found that it wasn't that at all but rather, under the skin was a much weaker shade of yellow and peeling off a sample decided that it wasn't wise to trust the acid surface but before a soul could be warned the tree began to fall.

Phyllis Bellevance

THE CHANGING ROLE OF ART

by J. Abbett

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such a little word
so many possibilities

CREDIT BOX

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REVIEW

The current exhibit at Brandeis, to wit, "Vision and Television" seems to be what people might consider a manifestation of "the changing role of art", so a review of the show is not likely to be incontinent with the rest of this issue. (Let me remind my readers that this theme was not my idea and its taken me a couple of weeks to come up with an idea that sounds tolerably interesting that fits with the theme.) I should also add that the exhibit probably wasn't completely assembled at the time I saw it, if that has any relevance to this review, which I suspect it hasn't.

My basic criticism with the works at Brandeis is first, that the exhibitors seem so impressed with themselves for an obviously "new" medium that they don't seem to feel the need to do anything new with it. Secondly, none of the exhibitors have done much with the aspects of television that make it unique, like that it can be transmitted over long distances and seen by millions of people in their own homes.

Im sure there are few people who attended the show at Brandeis who have not seen themselves on closed circuit TV. Admittedly it is probable that a smaller proportion of the population has had such an opportunity, but then, art exhibits are not seen by representative sections of the population. I don't understand, then, why at least four exhibits were based on little more than that. Most of these did nothing that couldn't have been done as well with a mirror. One work consisted in a color TV set with the color badly tuned (somehow the idea of badly tuned color, crass as it is, has a great fascination for TV artists) and music. Another work was a pile of TV sets, each tuned to a different "program" (the content of which couldn't possibly have been significant) and one set showing pictures of the people as they looked at the work. These works were so unimaginative they made me wince. (It recalled the same mixture of embarrassment and pity as I used to have in freshman design when we all had to hang up things that were obviously thrown together at the last minute.)

There were other works as boring as they were unimaginative, like the prismatic diffuser taking up a whole wall with about ten arbitrarily arranged sets of lights that flashed off and on behind it. Or worse yet, nothing more than a prismatic diffuser with TV sets behind it.

One exhibit was supposed to be the high spot of the show (so I was told by an official-looking person.) It was a tape of a program shown on PBL.

played on three TV sets, each tuned slightly differently, and all with the color badly set. (Badly tuned TV color, like silver christmas trees and revolving christmas tree lights, only give me a headache. I would still love to know its appeal.) The PBL show consisted in several TV works by nationally prominent artists. One of the least boring of these was a dance piece. Unfortunately though, whoever did it never got over high contrast multi colored photography and succeeded in obliterating most of what seemed to be very nice dance. If this is as far as TV can go it hardly seems worth the effort. We really can't even use the excuse that TV is a new medium. Movies were pretty good from the start.

Admittedly the whole exhibit wasn't this bad. The TV bra-for-living sculpture was funny. There was an interesting film on the making of computer graphics.

There were also some gadgets to play with—like an oscilloscope. But somehow it wasn't enough to leave an old oscilloscope out and let people play with it (they really are fun,) but it had to be in a silver-covered neo 1930 radio case. It seemed like the artist presenting it felt guilty (and rightly so) in entering someone else's work (namely the inventor of the oscilloscope) as his own and felt he had to make some excuse for it. Similarly there was a TV with a magnet on top which bent the pattern on the screen when it was turned. It demonstrated an interesting phenomenon (that apparently TV waves are bent by magnetic fields but failed to explain it, which I think would have been more interesting than the mere image of a bent line on TV).

If this is the best work done in TV recently (and I can't believe that) then we may conclude that art is lagging far behind technology and feels it is sufficient simply to use new technological devices with old or half-developed ways of thinking. I would like to see some art that, forget the technological device, originated in a creativity at least equal to that from which scientific developments arise. Putting an oscilloscope in a silver box is tragic. Is that all artists can come up with? Let the oscilloscopes stand on their own as products of creative minds. Lets have art, not that uses TV as a medium (Bonanza uses TV) but that is as good and innovative and creative as the invention television itself. If artists want to do art for our scientific age, (and this is a fine thing) let it rival our science in its quality.

Elaine Luti

I heard a comment the other day that echoes a growing trend in the thoughts of many people at this school, and its blatant naivete scares me. The statement: "Everybody understands and accepts art today". It is reassuring to say, I suppose, but the truth does not support it.

If you look outside this school, at the classrooms and libraries of educational institutions, you will find masses of people who don't care about wrapped seacoasts or Marcel Duchamps. And these people are the Engineer at Norton Abrasives, the math teacher at P.S. 74 and the druggist behind the many Rexal drug counters. And think of the graduating high school senior class with some thirty-five per cent (maybe) going to college and the rest entering that massive society to pursue the American Dream, with its cheap plastic "beauty" you so often disdain. And how many blue collar workers know what an earth work is?

The artists of this school who are trying to involve everyone in art have succeeded only in involving themselves— which says something about the success of understanding and accepting art.

David Hawkins

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

To do that, it seems to me, one should first take a look within oneself and relate the two...for in that union comes creativity and in that, Art. Never become indifferent to what is going on without you as well as within you. Art is in you... look inside yourself, outside yourself, not just inside Art Forum (did Giotto have a subscription?). (P.S. Why that title, you ask? ...well, if you did, it comes from what one of the gentlemen said to me as I filmed him.

Ronnie Cox